Manchester College, Oxford.

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH
AND
THE MINISTRY OF RELIGION.

An Address

BY THE

REV. C. C. COE, F.R.G.S.
(VISITOR),

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

OPENING OF THE 123rd SESSION,

12TH OCTOBER, 1908.

The College adheres to its original principle of freely imparting Theological knowledge without insisting on the adoption of particular Theological doctrines.

Manchester:
H. RAWSON & CO., PRINTERS, 16, NEW BROWN STREET.—[30,049.]

1908.

Manchester College, Oxford.

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH
AND
THE MINISTRY OF RELIGION.

An Address

BY THE

REV. C. C. COE, F.R.G.S.

(VISITOR),

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

OPENING OF THE 123rd SESSION,

12TH OCTOBER, 1908.

The College adheres to its original principle of freely imparting Theological knowledge without insisting on the adoption of particular Theological doctrines.

Manchester:

H. RAWSON & CO., PRINTERS, 16, NEW BROWN STREET.—[30,049.]

1908.

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

AND

THE MINISTRY OF RELIGION.

GENTLEMEN,

You are by this time probably aware—you must be abnormally impervious to oft-repeated statements if you are not aware—that a prominent and, I may say, a distinguishing feature of the College of which you are alumni is its freedom. You have been invited to enter it as free searchers after the truth. Coming here to be trained for the ministry of religion, the only thing required of you, apart from proofs of intellectual capacity, is that you should have at least an average endowment of religious sentiment. You will be required, of course, to give a correct version of the opinions of others, but you are free to form your own opinions under the guidance of, or in opposition to, the express teachings of your Professors and Lecturers. You will not be "sent down" if you exercise your own judgment, wisely or unwisely, as the case may be; and should you be privileged to hear teachers who have arrived at diametrically different opinions on the same subject, you will not be required to give your undivided adhesion to both.

And when you leave this place you are free, if it so pleases you, to resign your freedom, free to enter the Roman Catholic Church, and, bowing to its authority, to teach its dogmas and celebrate its ritual so as to promote the piety and the morality of your flock, as many a faithful priest has done. You are free to enter the Established Church of England, and, availing yourself of the prestige of an English Churchman, to justify that prestige in your case by proved capacity and unwearying zeal,

as many a clergyman has done, whether occupying the highest ecclesiastical position or ministering humbly, but none the less efficiently, to the spiritual and temporal needs of the humblest village. Of such a one it was said—

> Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,
> By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
> Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
> More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.

You are free to enter one of those churches which arrogate to themselves the title of "free," to cultivate the common orthodoxy which they have formulated in their Catechism, to cherish the Nonconformist conscience, and thus to make yourselves powers for good in the ecclesiastical and political worlds, as so many eminent orthodox Nonconformist ministers have done. And finally, you are free to join that group of Churches whose ministers are permitted—nay, invited—to express their own opinions, without any pledge on the part of the congregation that those opinions will be adopted by those who hear you, but who may nevertheless unite at least in admiration of your earnestness and sincerity, and in the recognition of the moral and spiritual power of your utterance, as has happened to many honoured men, and, not least of all, to him of whom it was said, "We have built these new schools to extend the influence of our minister." That this noble appreciation was well deserved you will be ready to admit, when I tell you that it was spoken of the present Chairman of the Committee of Manchester College, Oxford.

It is not my object on the present occasion to offer any considerations which may help you to determine your choice as to the sphere of your future activity. I desire to direct your attention to what is involved in the right of private judgment and the free search for the Truth. It is a glorious pursuit; youthful enthusiasm kindles at the thought. To discover some new truth, and so to proclaim it that the world is compelled to

acknowledge it as such, is one of the noblest ambitions that you can entertain. But in claiming the right of private judgment you tacitly imply that you are prepared to perform the duty of private judgment. By professing your readiness to become seekers after the truth you pledge yourselves to perform a task which you will soon find makes great demands upon your ability and is beset with many difficulties. It requires the critical acumen and unbiassed mind of the upright judge, the insight of genius, and the dogged determination of an indomitable patience.

There is one way out of this difficulty: if you can believe that you have a right to form and advocate opinions without having any grounds to support them; if you believe that you know all things without having learned anything; if you rely on the infallible intuition within you. But I will not venture to impute such a belief to you, for we have high authority for saying that we are none of us infallible, not even the youngest. And the revered ex-Principal of this College, in his "Studies in Christian Doctrine," has taught us that we do not possess an infallible judgment of the veracity of theological truths. He says:—

"The idea that the human mind possesses the consciousness of the veracity of theological truths the moment they are presented, a claim which has sometimes been made by ardent advocates of intuition, seems opposed to most obvious facts." (p. 51.)

And if we cannot intuitively judge opinions presented to our notice, still less is it likely that we shall be infallible if we form opinions of our own by the aid of intuition only. If I ever felt inclined to put forth such a claim, I was saved from such presumption by an incident which occurred to me in the early days of my ministry. On my way to preach at the Great Meeting, Leicester, I overtook one of my congregation, and, after the ordinary greetings, he suddenly sprang this question upon me:

"Do you know, sir, who wrote the Book of Psalms?" "Well," I said, "I suppose the Psalms were written by many authors at different times, and perhaps David wrote a few of them, but I should not like to assert dogmatically that he did or did not." My friend gave a scornful snort. "Well," I said, "do you know who wrote the Psalms?" "The Book of Psalms, sir, was written by our Lord Jesus Christ during the forty days of his temptation." "Might I ask what is your authority for that remarkable statement?" To which he replied: "Sir, I know."

Another way of avoiding the duty of forming opinions is to fall back on the authority of an infallible Bible, or an infallible Church. But I need not remind you that no such book or Church has ever existed.

There is, however, in the Bible a rule laid down for testing the worth of prophetic utterance which at first has an air of sweet reasonableness. In the Book of Deuteronomy we read:—

"And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." (xviii. 21-2.)

This implies that a fulfilled anticipation is a proof of special revelation. But it is surely possible that the ordinary intelligence of man, aided by experience of the past, might prophesy truly without any miraculous aid of the divine spirit. Moreover, this warning is of little value till the prophet has been tested, and in order to escape all risks to ourselves we should want a vile body to try the experiment upon. Nor does it follow that a prophet is always reliable because his forecast may be correct in some cases. Sometimes the agreement may be matter of purest accident. A poor woman once went to Flamsteed, the Astronomer Royal, apparently under the impression that he was

an astrologer, and asked him to tell her where she could find a little stock of silver, of which she had been robbed. He thought here was a good opportunity of teaching her a lesson. So he told her that if she went up a lane near her house she would find her spoons hidden in a hole underneath the hedge on the left-hand side. He expected that she would come back and tell him that she could not find them, and then he would read her a rare lesson as to the folly of her trust in him. Imagine then, his surprise when the woman came, and with tears of joy showed him her recovered property. She had found it even as he had said. He was dumbfounded. There was no place for the lesson which he intended to teach.

And if he had used the art of the astrologer with success should we believe in astrology any the more for this?

When my first child was born, a member of my congregation wished to cast her horoscope, and asked me for the day and hour of her birth. I declined, on the ground that I did not wish to foresee the future, and then I ventured to express my doubt that in the middle of the 19th century of the Christian era any of our neighbours should believe in such forecasts. To which he replied: "People come, however, to consult me on matters of business. And the same people come again and again." And yet in spite of his assurance I could not bring myself to believe in the art of the astrologer.

If we appeal to the authority of the expert, it is obvious that even the expert is not necessarily infallible. In the first place experts differ in the conclusions at which they arrive. Two men equally honest and equally anxious to arrive at the truth, and equally equipped for the work, do not reach the same results. But in this case we should scarcely feel inclined to follow the advice I once heard given: "The best policy is to read one authority and to follow him, and not to raise the question whether he or those who differ from him teach the truth." And if we did adopt the opinions of one expert on the ground of his

strong and capable personality, it might be that our authority would change his opinions, and advocate in his old age the principles which he had reprobated in his youth. Now of this phenomenon there are two possible explanations. It is either due to the greater experience and fuller wisdom of an honoured age; or it may arise from the decline of mental power and the softening of the brain. I should prefer to believe in the former explanation, but such preference must not be allowed to decide which view is the true one.

Sometimes second thoughts are best. Dr. Scrivener at first preferred the reading in Mark vi. 20 (ἠπόρει) which occurs in the Sinaitic and the Vatican, and which makes the Evangelist say: "When he (Herod) heard him (John) he was much perplexed, and he heard him gladly." Afterwards he preferred the common reading ἐποίει. "When he heard him he did many things, and he heard him gladly." With regard to the first reading, we may well ask why Herod was glad to be perplexed, whereas Scrivener gives the following admirable explanation of the common reading: "Herod gladly heard the Baptist, and did many things at his exhortation—everything in fact save the one great sacrifice which he could not persuade himself to make."

In justice to the expert it is necessary that we should deal with him at first hand, and read not only the quotation given, but the context in which it occurs. A quotation may be verbally accurate, and yet, taken out of its connection, may be made to indicate an opinion the very opposite to that which the author holds. Such misrepresentation is almost criminal. It injures the author, it injures the cause which he espouses, it deludes the readers who are thus blinded to the true facts of the case.

Thus the great scientist Helmholtz, the highest authority, according to Romanes, both in the physics and the physiology of the human eye, is often quoted to the following effect. I have seen the quotation in books whose authors ought to have known

better, and again and again in the columns of newspapers whose editors might not be expected to know better.

"It is not too much to say that if an optician wanted to sell me an instrument which had all these defects, I should think myself quite justified in blaming his carelessness in the strongest terms, and giving him back his instrument."

Now one might very well suppose that this was the final verdict of Helmholtz concluding an essay in which all the defects of the eye had been explained. But in point of fact it is a somewhat rhetorical statement of difficulties, made all the stronger by the writer from the consciousness that all these difficulties have been practically overcome. True the eye is not a perfect optical instrument—is not free from all defects, but Helmholtz proceeds to say that a man in a normal condition of health is quite unconscious of their existence. Nay he will have to take some trouble in order to discover them. Now in this matter I am very much in the position of Mr. Dick. When it was remarked to him that the bedroom which he proposed to occupy was so small that he could not swing a cat in it, he replied, with that large commonsense which characterised his utterances when he forgot that some of the trouble had been taken out of King Charles' head and put into his own: "You know, Trotwood, I don't want to swing a cat. I never do swing a cat. So that does not signify to me."

So as I have no desire to spend my evenings in looking at a street lamp through a glass coloured with cobalt oxide, as I do not want to spend my days looking at the bright sky through the smallest possible aperture, as it never occurs to me to shut one eye and use the other so that I can see my fellow creatures without their heads, as Marriotte taught King Charles II. and his court to do,—a strange amusement for the son of the Martyr King,—as I do not desire to get drunk so that I may see three crescent moons, where I know there is only one, the defects which I can only discover by these means, "do not signify to me."

It only remains to say that the real conclusion at which Helmholtz arrives is as follows:—

"The adaptation of the eye to its function is therefore most complete, and is seen in the very limits which are set to its defects. Here the result which may be reached by innumerable generations working under the Darwinian law of inheritance coincides with what the wisest wisdom may have devised beforehand."

Again I venture to warn you against being misled by the glowing language of the picturesque historian, especially when he substitutes the visions of his imagination for the recorded facts of history. You have all, I doubt not, been charmed by the exquisite beauty and rhythm of Ruskin's style, you have admired his ardent advocacy of truth: truth in art, truth in morals, truth in religion. You have been electrified by the intensity of his feeling. You have quailed beneath his denunciations of all that is base and mean and unworthy. You have naturally felt inclined to believe that such a writer might be trusted to say only what he had good authority for believing to be true.

Impressed with these feelings, I take up "The Bible of Amiens," and I read what Ruskin says of St. Martin. I read and I admire, and I also wonder.

"He is no preaching saint. Nevertheless, after a while, without any oratorising, anathematising, or any manner of disturbance, we find the Roman Knight made Bishop of Tours." . . . "St. Martin spends not a breath in unpleasant exhortation."

And in these respects he contrasts most favourably, according to Ruskin, with St. Firmin, "the impatient missionary, who riots and rants about Amiens streets for forty days, and then is heard of no more out of Amiens, whereas new shrines innumerable in all lands are named after the gentle Martin."

And yet long before he was made Bishop of Tours he protested so loudly against the Arian heresy that he was publicly whipped and driven out of Sabaria. He returned to

Italy. Then Auxentius, the Arian Bishop of Milan, became acquainted with his zeal for the orthodox faith and the Nicene Creed, and drove him out of that diocese.

"He was not a persecuting saint. . . . In his gentleness was his strength, and somehow the idols totter before him far and near." Nevertheless we read:

"Wherever he went he destroyed, with crowbar and firebrand the ancient temples in which the people were wont to worship, and built churches on their ruins. At Levroux he attempted the destruction of a rich and stately temple, but met with so much opposition that he was obliged to retire and call to his aid some of the Roman military; and, surrounded by their shields and pikes, he re-entered Levroux, and put the torch to the temple. He tore up the foundations and pounded to dust the idols and altars before the eyes of an indignant people."

And yet this is the man who is said not to be a persecuting saint. This is the man whose gentleness was his strength.

"Of his prayers we hear little, of his wishes nothing," says Mr. Ruskin. And yet we read of "the constant union of his soul with God by the exercise of holy prayer, and by the entire resignation of himself to the divine will in all things without reserve." "Amidst his exterior employments his heart was always closely united to God, and he seemed never to lose sight of his presence, either in words or action." "In his last hours he continually held up his eyes and hands to heaven, never interrupting his prayer."

We are told we hear nothing of his wishes.

When Count Avitianus came to Tours with a long chain of miserable captives, and orders were issued for their torture and execution, Martin left his retreat and hastened to Tours. It was night when he reached the town. The palace was closed. Martin threw himself on the doorstep, and besieged the house with his cries. The servants would have left him there all night, but Avitianus opened the door. "Do not even

speak," he said, "I know thy request. Every prisoner shall be spared. I grant them their lives and liberty at thy unspoken petition."

"He is the patron of honest drinking; the stuffing of your Martinmas goose is fragrant in his nostrils." "He remains the patron of good Christian topers to this hour."

Nevertheless, we are told that "When he took refuge in the island of Gallinarea he nourished himself on roots and herbs. He remained a monk after he became a bishop. He and his eighty disciples dressed in skins, ate only once a day, and drank no wine."

Some of those about Martin saw in his visions only the dreams of a man prostrated by much fasting, and liable to the exhaustion produced by excessive austerities to become a prey to hallucinations. He was, in fact, an ascetic of ascetics. By the irony of fate his saint day in the Calendar is the 11th of November, and thus St. Martin becomes associated with an already existing season of special festivity, both in France and in England.

Wordsworth speaks of spending the sabbath of old age in peace, and describes it as an ascent rather than descent, from which men look down upon the busy world in which they have ceased to take an active part. Such, according to Ruskin, was the old age of St. Martin, which he pictures in these glowing tender words:—

"As gathering years told upon him, he seems to have felt that he had carried weight of crosier long enough; that busy Tours must now find a busier Bishop; that, for himself, he might innocently henceforward take his pleasure and his rest where the vine grew and the lark sang. For his episcopal palace he takes a little cave in the chalk cliffs of the up-country river; arranges all matters therein, for bed and board, at small cost. Night by night the stream murmurs to him, day by day the vine-leaves give their shade, and daily by the horizon's

breadth so much nearer Heaven, the fore-running sun goes down for him beyond the glowing water; there, where now the peasant woman trots homeward between her panniers, and the saw rests in the half-cleft wood, and the village spire rises gray against the farthest light in Turner's Loire-side."

And yet we are told that when St. Martin was eighty years of age he went to the extreme confines of his diocese, to deal with a scandalous difference which had arisen among the clergy. He remained there some time and settled all things to his satisfaction—(our modern bishops are not always so successful). He was preparing for his return when he fell ill. Then his religious brethren implored him with tears for their sake to pray that his life might be spared. "The servant of God, moved by their tears, wept also, and prayed thus: 'Lord, if I am still necessary to thy people, I refuse no labour. Thy holy will be done.'" "As if he had said," says St. Sulpicius, "my soul is unconquered by old age, weakness, or fatigue, and ready to sustain new conflicts, if thou callest me to them. But if thou spare my age and take me to thyself, be the guardian and protector of those souls for which I fear."

Unless my experience is different from that of other people, the ignorant are prevented from absolute reliance on a great authority by happening to possess a certain knowledge of a comparatively trivial fact. I was early taught that the last book in the Bible should be called "The Revelation," and that it was a sign of crass ignorance to call it "The Revelations," and yet how often have I seen it so written in learned works. I was recommended a certain work, "Dictionnaire Universel des Sciences Ecclesiastiques," as an authority with regard to the Roman Catholic Religion which I was glad to see had been seen and approved by the Archbishop of Tours. According to this reliable work I find that the city of Norwich is situated on the river Yare, which is only an approximation to the truth seeing that Norwich is situated on the Wensum immediately above its

confluence with the Yare. The same work informs me that Arnobius "composed an eloquent work in which he defends the principal points of our religion,"—that is the Roman Catholic Religion. Now I have read Arnobius more than once, and I venture to say that his view of the deity of Christ is not orthodox, and that to go no further, his argument against the worship of images is most trenchant. If a modern writer were to pretend that he had found this work in an ancient manuscript, I am confident that he would be charged with making a covert attack on the Roman Catholic Religion, and the work would be placed in the Index Expurgatorius.

To take another illustration. It has been my privilege for many years past to sit at the feet of the University Extension Lecturer, a custom which I would strongly advise you to adopt, not only for the knowledge which you will acquire, but on account of the lessons which you may learn in the art of conveying knowledge, and the inspiration which you may gain from the eloquence, and in some cases from the wit and humour of the speakers. One of my most admired teachers said the other night that Thackeray stopped the issue of "Unto this Last" in the "Cornhill Magazine." But as I happened to have had in my possession the first two volumes of the "Cornhill Magazine" since their publication, I knew that this at any rate was a mis-statement. It is thus that ignorance is protected from believing in the infallibility of its teachers, for no one would go the length of asserting that because a writer or speaker makes mistakes about trivial matters with which we happen to be acquainted, it is impossible that he should make mistakes in the more important matters about which we know nothing.

Sometimes authorities are themselves very candid in admitting how fallible they are. Thus, in a remarkable Essay, the historian Froude has pictured himself arraigned before the judgment seat, and has ocular demonstration of the partial veracity of all that he had written:

"In the way of work there was nothing to be shown but certain books and other writings, and these were spread out to be tested. A fluid was poured on the pages, the effect of which was to obliterate entirely every untrue proposition, and to make every partially true proposition grow faint in proportion to the false element which entered into it. Alas! chapter after chapter vanished away, leaving the paper clean as if no compositor had ever laboured in setting type for it. Pale and illegible became the fine-sounding paragraphs on which I had secretly prided myself. A few passages, however, survived here and there at long intervals. They were those on which I had laboured least and had almost forgotten, or those, as I observed in one or two instances, which had been selected for special reprobation in the weekly journals. Something stood to my credit, and the worst charge of wilfully and intentionally setting down what I did not believe to be true was not alleged against me. Ignorance, prejudice, carelessness, sins of infirmity—culpable indeed, but not culpable in the last degree; the water in the ink, the commonplaces, the ineffectual sentiments; these, to my unspeakable comfort, I perceived were my heaviest crimes."

The final judgment passed upon him is as follows:—"You shall take up your life where it was dropped and finish it to its natural end, and if you can find any better employment for your remaining years than that of book writing, I advise you to take to it."—("A Siding at a Railway Station," by J. A. Froude. *Fraser's Magazine*, Nov., 1879.)

Mr. Darwin says: "The inaccuracy of the blessed gang (of which I am one) of compilers passes all bounds. Monsters have frequently been described as hybrids without a tittle of evidence. I must give one other case to show how we jolly fellows work. A Belgian Baron (I forget his name at this moment) crossed two distinct geese and got seven hybrids, which he proved subsequently to be quite sterile; well, compiler the first, Chevreul,

says that the hybrids were propagated for seven generations *inter se.* Compiler second (Morton) mistakes the French name and gives Latin names for two more distinct geese, and says Chevreul himself propagated them *inter se* for seven generations, and the latter statement is copied from book to book." ("Life of Darwin." Vol. II., p. 281. Note.).

Amiel, in his "Journal Intime," which is the fullest possible expression of his inmost thoughts, says: "These pages reproduce me very imperfectly and there are many things in me of which I find no trace in them." (Eng. Trans., p. 125).

And this leads me to say that we cannot always rely on the exact truth of what a man says about himself. This may be because a man does not know himself, or he knows himself too well and would fain attempt to make himself out better than he is, and in a bad sense writes an *apologia pro vita sua.* George Eliot says that private prayer or the ministerial explanation which the conscience makes in the House of the Soul is no truer than some other ministerial explanations—is not so accordant with fact as its privacy might lead us to suppose.

I think it will be obvious from what I have said that it is not easy to get at the materials on which to form an opinion. Even an expert will not find it an easy task, and how will it be with those who are not experts? It seems presumptuous to criticise those who are experts, and yet you must do this and do it judicially if you are to form an opinion that is worth anything.

And when you have arrived at a definite opinion, and perhaps a true one, it would sometimes be better to keep it to yourselves so far as your own peace of mind is concerned.

The expression of your opinions, even when they have been attained by the most careful study, will not always be an unmixed joy. If you try to form a perfectly just estimate of the popular idol of the hour, of a man adored as a hero, worshipped as a saint, and therefore trusted with the conduct of imperial affairs, you will find that you will not be able to alter

the reverent adoration of his admirers, to whom he will still be "the hero of heroes." But you will run the risk of lowering their opinion of yourself. You will be charged, most unjustly, with garbling the passages which you quote in evidence. You will be regarded by a simple piety as a "very wicked man" for saying such things. You will be looked upon as a dangerous fanatic, who cannot be trusted to be left alone with a hostile critic for a few minutes lest you should immediately proceed to hostilities. You will be sorrowfully looked upon as a man with a soul incapable of a generous hero-worship. You will be denounced as a man without a soul. "The man is without a soul that looks into this great soul of a man radiant with the splendours of very Heaven, and sees nothing there but the shadow of his own mean darkness."—"Carlyle: Cromwell's Letters and Speeches," II. 358.

If you dare to oppose the most popular scientific theory of the day, the result will be very much the same. If you speak of the marriage of animals, your Roman Catholic reviewer will charge you with blaspheming the sacrament of matrimony. You will be charged with offering an "insult to any Christian society such as that in which we live"; and your blasphemy will be only partially, and somewhat contemptuously, condoned by your deplorable ignorance as a heretic.

You will be charged with doing injustice to an author and virtually bearing false witness against your neighbour, because you quote from his notes, just as if notes were not written to further elucidate the subject treated of in the text, but were a kind of sediment of error which had been deposited at the bottom of the page, leaving the text clear as crystal and free from all impurities.

You will be told that unless you have made some original observations of the facts of nature, you are obviously unfitted to discuss the theories of men.

But what does the scientist do in forming a theory? He

first observes facts and then he conceives of a theory to explain those facts. But the mental qualifications necessary to the successful performance of those two functions are as different as possible. The observer of facts must be most careful in his observations, most accurate in his measurements, most truthful in his reports; whereas to form a true theory is at first one of the most daring acts of a creative imagination.

"Bounded and conditioned by co-operant Reason," says Professor Tyndall, "imagination becomes the mightiest instrument of the physical discoverer. Newton's passage from a falling apple to a falling moon was, at the outset, a leap of the imagination. In fact, without this power our knowledge of Nature would be a mere tabulation of co-existences and sequences. We should still believe in the succession of day and night, of summer and winter, but the soul of force would be dislodged from our universe. Causal relations would disappear, and with them that science which is now binding the parts of Nature into an organic whole."

Now, in this two-fold process, an outsider who exercises his imagination and his reason is not necessarily capable of making careful observations; but the careful observations having been already made, why should any rational being not be permitted to argue on the facts? If the expert is at liberty to develop his theory, why should not another person, not a scientific expert in the observation of facts, criticise it? Nevertheless, we are told by the critic, "Above all you must be a naturalist, submitting new facts from the natural world or new sides of old facts to gain a hearing. Naturalists who come across his book will see that he has nothing but words to offer them, and will pass by to some wretched little pamphlet, describing a new nodule on the shell of a snail, or some exact statistics as to the breeding of a louse."

As to the latter remark, I can only say that if I were to become an observer of the facts of nature I should not choose the last named as the object of my investigations. Still less

should I care to provide on my person or in my immediate vicinity a nidus for the operation referred to.

You will be stigmatised as a late anti-Darwinian, just as if the controversy had long been settled, and you were in the same category with those who believe that the sun revolves round the earth.

On the other hand, you will be told by a friendly critic: "It is useless to argue against the fashions in science as in dress-making. In both cases the voice of reason is not listened to until the fashion has run its course, and the περιπέτεια comes when it is suddenly admitted that all the evidence for the old view was inconclusive."

But the comfort which is thus suggested, that our views may triumph some day though we may not live to see it, does not apply to the discussion of some subjects. Do the best you can, and be as original as you please, and you will only add another opinion to those already in existence. It is only the scientist and the mathematician and a few others who are able to proclaim a truth which the world is compelled to acknowledge as such. According to Milton the question of freewill was discussed by the fallen angels in Hell.

> "Others apart sat, on a hill retired,
> In thoughts more elevate and reason'd high
> Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;
> Fix'd fate, freewill, foreknowledge absolute;
> And found no end, in wandering mazes lost."

I know not whether the discussion still continues there, but the question certainly is not for ever settled here where the debate is carried on, not by fallen angels but by the most estimable of men.

Hence we might be tempted to ask: What's the good of it all? Is the game worth the candle? If it is so difficult to get reliable materials for judgment, if it is so presumptuous to put our opinions before others more experienced than ourselves, if, after all, the opinion which is our own, home-made to the very best of

our ability, only exists for the world as one among many different opinions, shall we not do well to rely on authority such as it is? Gibbon answered that question when, speaking with reference to the statements made concerning Priscillian, he characterises them as scandalous calumnies which Tillemont swallows like a child and Lardner refutes like a man.

But I must not forget that you are in search of the truth and not of an opinion. Therefore the moment you form a strong opinion of your own you must begin to keep a watch over yourselves. The temptation will be strong upon you to become the advocates, the special pleaders rather than disinterested judges. If you are faithful searchers after the truth, in urging your opinions you ought to avoid all appeals to the feelings, all rhetorical expressions, you ought to confine yourselves to plain statements of what you believe to be facts and of just inferences from facts. You will desire in your heart of hearts that the truth may prevail, and be content that it should do so even at the cost of your own discomfiture.

This should apply to theology no less than to other subjects. As speculative theologians you should always strive to preserve the open mind.

But in addition to the search for truth, you are called to the Ministry of Religion, which I suppose means that you will endeavour to extend the area over which its influence extends, and to deepen the convictions of those who believe. This, I suppose, will be your first duty, and your chief work, and only in the second place, will you be politicians, speculative philosophers, citizens of the world, philanthropists at large, amateur athletes, and I know not what else—all of these very good things in their proper place, which should be a subordinate one. And you will probably see the advisability of making the congregations committed to your care religious before you try your hand on the world at large.

Now I suppose that the members of a congregation may be

divided into two classes—those who have definite convictions and those who have not.

With regard to the latter, it will be your object to impart what they do not yet possess. Now "it is one of the secrets in that change of mental poise, which has been fitly named conversion, that to many neither heaven nor earth has any revelation till some personality touches theirs with a peculiar influence, subduing it into receptiveness." O! to exercise a personality like that! To be the person above other persons in influence—the parson. And further, note this, "From the spectacle of devoted excellence and saintly beauty of mind, as from nothing else flashes down upon us the awful and redeeming sense of new obligation: the thing seen in the concrete becomes conviction in the abstract, and a religion lived passes into a religion believed." So live your religion, and by God's grace you shall produce conviction in others. If you only go through the form of trying to convince others inspired by no earnestness then take heed to the result.

Referring to one of Cromwell's speeches, Carlyle says:—"The rough speech when read faithfully becomes transparent, every word of it, credible, calculated to produce conviction every word of it, and that I suppose is, or should be, the definition of a good speech. Other good speeches ought to be spoken in Bedlam, unless, indeed, you will concede them Drury Lane and admittance one shilling. Spoken in other localities than these, without belief on the speaker's part, or hope or chance of producing belief on the hearer's. Ye heavens, as if the good-speeching individual were some frightful wood and leather man made in Nürnberg and tenanted by a Devil: set to increase the sum of Human madness instead of lessening it."

Perhaps you will say that I have no right to assume that any member has definite convictions in those communions which do not formulate those convictions in the shape of creeds. And yet in most creedless Churches certain truths are implied.

If you minister in a Church dedicated and set apart to the worship of God, that implies the existence of a God to be worshipped. If you minister to a people who profess and call themselves Christians, and are mightily indignant if any outsider denies that they are, that surely implies a discipleship of Christ which looks to him as teacher and exemplar and adopts his belief in the beneficent Providence and moral government of God and in a conscious personal immortality after death. No one calling you to the ministry of such a church would expect that you should teach a morality without the sanction of religion, a religion without a God, a Christianity without a Christ, or an immortality without a personal consciousness of continued existence after death.

Well, if that is so, in dealing with those who implicitly profess to accept certain truths, you will no longer be searching for the truth, your main duty will be to persuade your hearers to practise what they profess to believe. There is or was an intellectual process which proves or attempts to prove certain theological truths and does nothing more. There is a sentimental belief in religion which draws pictures and admires their beauty, and there it stops. And you will have to persuade the people not only to argue but to act, not only to admire but to imitate. A lecturer a short time back asked a fair student whether she liked the poetry of Spenser. With a charming smile and a twinkle in her eye she replied: "Very much in theory." There are a good many people who admire religion—in theory. You have to alter all this, if you can.

"The end of all oratory, sacred or profane, is action: that is, either by argument or by forcible appeals to the passions to persuade people to do something. For example, the barrister tries to persuade the jury to give a verdict in favour of his client. The candidate tries to persuade the elector to vote for him. Let the preacher believe that he has the power of converting sinners by a single sentence, that his words may penetrate

the soul of any one of his hearers with such miraculous force as to throw him into convulsions of penitence, and he becomes a different man directly. He speaks like one inspired, and his influence at once is widespread and overpowering."

And surely without aspiring to throw hearers into "convulsions of penitence," it is possible for the faithful preacher to realise the fact that, having regard to moral and spiritual interests, his sermons are mere words, words, words, if they do not lead men to more virtuous action, to more holy aspiration, and to less shrinking self-sacrifice!

Ah! it will be well with you if you can touch a father's heart, so that his children shall say of him, as the child in the "Christmas Carol": "Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home is like heaven"; if you can touch the heart of the selfish wife, so that she becomes for the first time a true help-meet, and determines to be happy though married; if you unconsciously speak the word that is needed in some great crisis of another's life and save a soul from despair or from spiritual paralysis; if you can soften the heart of one alienated from his brother so that he goes straight away to be reconciled ere he sits down to his midday meal; if you can so speak to a stray prodigal son that he comes to you and sobs out his bitter remorse for his long neglect of filial duty. Such effects have often been produced by the preacher. To take one illustration: Dr. Vaughan, preaching in the Temple Church, tells how a poor woman came into that Church the previous Sunday, having with her the poison with which she meant to destroy herself: and that the effect of the service was such that she went forth and threw the poison into the Thames. And if this is so, surely it is fitting when you enter the pulpit you should pray that your word may be with power and bring forth fruits of piety and virtue.

In order to do this you must not speak perfunctorily. You must believe what you preach, and preach what you believe;

you must practise what you preach, and the familiar phrases will gain a new meaning and be uttered with a new power, by reason of the joys you have sanctified, the sorrows you have borne, the temptations with which you have struggled, the victories you have won—and, alas! the battles which you have lost; and, haply, the lapses which you have retrieved.

That will be the message of a living man, not of Carlyle's wood and leather demoniac; and thus in your sphere you will be able, by God's grace, to realise the ideal of a certain author, whose aspiration was—

"to do
Worthy the writing, and to write
Worthy the reading and the world's delight."